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1908

# Antoine Quilmette

A RESIDENT OF CHICAGO A. D. 1790-  
1826. THE FIRST SETTLER OF EVANS-  
TON AND WILMETTE (1826-1838) WITH  
A BRIEF HISTORY OF HIS FAMILY  
AND THE OUILMETTE RESERVATION

By FRANK R. GROVER

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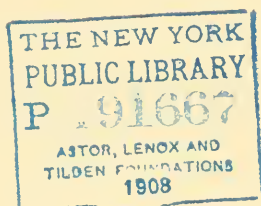
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EVANSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

1908  

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APV



SEVEN years ago (1901), in a paper read before this society entitled: "Our Indian Predecessors—the First Evanstonians," much of the information here given respecting the Ouilmette family and Reservation was presented for the first time from original sources and research. Since then further information has come to my hands from time to time, and the purpose of this pamphlet is to preserve for this society in concise form what has been thus acquired.

While at the present time few residents of this vicinity or of the North Shore are uninformed, at least to some extent, regarding Antoine Ouilmette and his family, still, for the convenience of the future student of local history, this monograph may be found an improvement on tradition embellished and handed down by the ever present "Old Settler."

F. R. G.

Evanston, Ill., May 1st, 1908.







North Shore Residence of Antoine Ouillette and Family (1828-1844). See page 19

*From water color drawing  
by Mr. Charles P. Westerfield*

## ANTOINE OUILMETTE.

The primeval beauty of that ancient forest that stood on the western shore of Lake Michigan immediately north of Chicago, and covering the ground that now constitutes the northern portion of the City of Evanston and the Village of Wilmette, has passed away. Many of its towering elms and great oaks that have stood for centuries of time remain to indicate in some measure what was the real beauty of that forest in the days when this Illinois country was unknown to white men.

In the place of much of that forest stand costly dwellings; public buildings; paved streets and all the evidences of individual and public effort that illustrate so graphically the advance of our western civilization, and especially the rapidity of growth and enterprise of Chicago and its suburbs. There is probably no spot in America where such rapid and marked change has taken place, for there are many young residents of that part of Illinois known in these later days as the "North Shore" who have observed step by step these changes that have transformed this wild woodland into the suburban home of thousands of Chicago's citizens.

In the midst of this former forest was the "Ouilmette Reservation." Those two quoted words have a peculiar significance to the few old settlers yet living who knew Antoine Ouilmette and his Pottawatomie squaw Archange. To the few lawyers and others who have to do with land titles and county records they indicate only the legal description of a tract of land. It is my purpose to relate as briefly as possible what I have been able to learn of its first proprietors:

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The Ouilmette Reservation and its former occupants and owners have been the subject of much solicitude and investigation, not entirely for historical purposes, but more especially that the white man might know that he had a

good white man's title to the Indian's land. Its southern boundary was Central Street, or a line due west from the Evanston light-house; the eastern boundary, Lake Michigan; the northern boundary a little south of Kenilworth (Elmwood Avenue, formerly North Avenue, Wilmette), and the western boundary at the western terminus of the present street-car line on Central Street in Evanston and Fifteenth Street in Wilmette, from which boundaries it will be seen that some 300 acres of the Reservation falls within the city limits of Evanston, while the remainder includes the greater portion of the Village of Wilmette.

The Reservation takes its name from its original owner, Archange Ouilmette, wife of Antoine Ouilmette, described in the original Treaty and Patent from the United States as a Pottawatomie woman. The name given the village—Wilmette—originates from Antoine himself and from the phonetic spelling of the French name "O-u-i-l-m-e-t-t-e," and is said upon good authority to have been first suggested as the name of the village by Judge Henry W. Blodgett, late of Waukegan, who was interested in the very early real estate transactions of the village.

There are many interesting facts regarding Ouilmette and his family. Antoine, the husband, was a Frenchman, who, like many of his countrymen, came to the West in early days and married an Indian wife. He was one of the first white residents of Chicago; some of the authorities say that, with the exception of Marquette, he was the very first. He was born at a place called Lahndrayh, near Montreal, Canada, in the year 1760. His first employment was with the American Fur Company, in Canada, and he came to Chicago in the employ of that company in the year 1790.

This striking figure in our local history, and in the very early history of Chicago, is sadly neglected in most, if not all, the historical writings. Almost every one in this locality knows that the Village of Wilmette was named after him; many misinformed people speak of Ouilmette as an Indian chief; a few of the writers merely mention his name as one of the early settlers of Chicago. And that has been the beginning and end of his written history.

Ouilmette's occupation cannot be more definitely stated

than to say that, after his employment by the American Fur Company, he was an employe of John Kinzie at Chicago, and thereafter in turn Indian trader, hunter and farmer. He was a type of the early French voyageurs, who lived and died among their Indian friends, loving more the hardships and excitement of the Western frontier than the easier life of Eastern civilization.

Archange Ouilmette, wife of Antoine, was a squaw of the Pottawatomie tribe, belonging to a band of that tribe located at the time she was married at "Gross Point," or what is now Evanston and Wilmette, although the band were constant rovers over the territory which became later the states of Illinois, Michigan, Indiana and Wisconsin. While Archange was of the Pottawatomie tribe, her father, it is said by one authority, was a white man, a trader in the employ of the American Fur Company, and a Frenchman, bearing the rather striking name of Francois Chevallier. Archange was born at Sugar Creek, Michigan, about 1764, and died at Council Bluffs, Iowa, in 1840. (Authority, Sophia Martell, daughter, and Israel Martell, grandson.)

Ouilmette had eight children, four sons and four daughters, viz.: Joseph, Louis, Francis, Mitchell, Elizabeth, Archange, Josette and Sophia; also an adopted daughter, Archange Trombla, who, on August 3, 1830, married John Mann, who in early times ran a ferry at Calumet. (Authority John Wentworth and Sophia Martell, the only surviving daughter of Antoine Ouilmette. She was still living in 1905 on the Pottawatomie Indian Reservation at St. Mary's, Kansas.)

If a detailed account of all Ouilmette saw and did could be written we would have a complete history of Chicago, Evanston and all the North Shore, during the eventful fifty years intervening between 1790 and 1840, and it is certain that he and his family bore no unimportant part in the history of Illinois during that half century of time.

#### OUILMETTE AT CHICAGO—THE FORT DEARBORN MASSACRE.

It appears from a letter signed with "his mark," written and witnessed by one James Moore, dated at Racine, June



1, 1839 (corroborated also by his family), that Ouilmette came to Chicago in 1790. A fac-simile of this letter, which is addressed to Mr. John H. Kinzie, appears in Blanchard's History of Chicago (p. 574), and contains some interesting facts, both historical and personal. He says:

"My home affairs are such that I cannot leave to see you at present.

"I came into Chicago in the year 1790 in July witness old Mr. Veaux . . . and Mr. Griano . . . These men were living in the country Before the war with the winnebagoes. Trading with them I saw the Indians Brake open the Door of my house and also the Door of Mr. Kinzie's House. At first there was only three Indians come. They told me there was Forty more coming and they told me to run. I Did So. in nine days all I found left of my things was the feathers of my beds scattered about The floor, the amount Destroyed By them at that time was about Eight hundred Dollars. Besides your father and me Had about four hundred hogs Destroyed by the Saim indians and nearly at the Saim time. further particulars when I See you. I wish you to write me whether it is best for me come thare or for you to come hear and how soon it must be Done"

"Yours with Respect"

his  
Antoine X Ouilmette"  
mark

"Jas. Moore"

The original letter was furnished to Mr. Blanchard by Mrs. Eleanor Kinzie Gordon of Savannah, Georgia, a daughter of John H. Kinzie.

Ouilmette owned and occupied one of the four cabins that constituted the settlement of Chicago in 1803. The other residents were Kinzie, Burns and Lee (Kirkland's Story of Chicago, Andrea's History of Chicago, Mrs. William Whistler's letter, written in 1875).

Ouilmette was in Chicago at the time of the massacre of the garrison of old Fort Dearborn in 1812 by the Pottawatomies, and his family was instrumental, at that time, in saving the lives of at least two whites. Mrs. John H. Kinzie in her historic book, "Wau-bun" (The Early Day), describes the circumstances:

"The next day after Black Partridge, the Pottawatomie Chief, had saved the life of Mrs. Helm in the massacre on the lake shore [commemorated by the monument recently erected at the place], a band of the most hostile and implacable of all the tribes of the Pottawatomies arrived at Chicago and, disappointed at their failure to participate in the massacre and plunder, were ready to wreak vengeance on the survivors, including Mrs. Helm and other members of Mr. Kinzie's family. Mrs. Kinzie says (Wau-bun, pages 235, 240):

"Black Partridge had watched their approach, and his fears were particularly awakened for the safety of Mrs. Helm (Mr. Kinzie's step-daughter). By his advice she was made to assume the ordinary dress of a French woman of the country.

"In this disguise she was conducted by Black Partridge himself to the house of Ouilmette, a Frenchman with a half-breed wife, who formed a part of the establishment of Mr. Kinzie, and whose dwelling was close at hand.\* It so happened that the Indians came first to this house in their search for prisoners. As they approached, the inmates, fearful that the fair complexion and general appearance of Mrs. Helm might betray her for an American, raised a large feather bed and placed her under the edge of it, upon the bedstead, with her face to the wall. Mrs. Bisson, the sister of Ouilmette's wife, then seated herself with her sewing upon the foot of the bed."

It was a hot day in August, and Mrs. Helm suffered so much from her position and was so nearly suffocated that she entreated to be released and given up to the Indians. "I can but die," said she. "Let them put an end to my misery at once." When they assured her that her discovery would be the death of them all, she remained quiet.

"The Indians entered and she could occasionally see them from her hiding place, gliding about and stealthily inspecting every part of the room, though without making any ostensible search, until apparently satisfied that there was no one concealed, they left the house. . . . All this time Mrs. Bisson had kept her seat upon the side of the bed, calmly sorting and arranging the patch work of the quilt on which she was then engaged and preserving the appearance of the utmost tranquillity, although she knew not but the next moment she might receive a tomahawk in her brain. Her self command unquestionably saved the lives of all present. . . . From Ouilmette's house the party proceeded to the dwelling of Mr. Kinzie."

The Indians had just left Ouilmette's house when one Griffin, a non-commissioned officer, who had escaped and had been concealed among the current bushes of Ouilmette's garden, climbed into Ouilmette's house through a window to hide from the Indians. "The family stripped him of his uniform and arrayed him in a suit of deer skin with belt, moccasins and pipe, like a French engage," in which disguise he also escaped.

After the massacre, when John Kinzie and all the other white settlers and their families, fled from the place, Ouilmette and his family remained, and he was the only white resident of Chicago for the following four years, 1812 to

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\*The popular pictures of early Chicago, drawn by Mrs. John H. Kinzie and copied from "Wau-bun" seem to show this identical house.

1816. (Kirkland's "Story of Chicago"; Hurlbut's "Chicago Antiquities.") The reason for their thus remaining was on account of their friendly relationship with most, if not all, the Indian population.

In 1814 Alexander Robinson (afterwards chief of the Pottawatomies), came to Chicago, and he and Ouilmette cultivated the field formerly used as the garden of old Fort Dearborn. They raised good crops of corn and sold the crop of 1816 to Captain Bradley, after his arrival at Chicago to rebuild the fort. (Andrea's History of Chicago.) He was still in Chicago in 1821. (Andrea's Id. Kirkland Id.)

He had horses and oxen and other stock in abundance. In the early days he kept a small store in Chicago, and used to tow boats into the Chicago river with his ox teams. He also furnished the Fort Dearborn garrison with meat and fuel and carried on trading operations with the Indians along the North Shore from Chicago to Milwaukee and in Canada, where he frequently went. (Authority, Sophia Martell.)

Mrs. Archibald Clybourne says that Ouilmette raised sheep when he lived in Chicago, and that her mother, Mrs. Galloway, used to purchase the wool of him with which she spun yarn and knit stockings for the Fort Dearborn soldiers.

Ouilmette was a thrifty Frenchman. In 1825 he was one of the principal tax payers in Chicago, and paid \$4 taxes that year upon property valued at \$400, as appears by an old tax roll, dated July 25 of that year. (Blanchard's "History of Chicago," p. 517.) With one exception none of the fourteen tax payers of that year owned property in excess of \$1,000. John Kinzie's holdings appear on the same roll as worth \$500, while those of John B. Beaubien are set down at \$1,000; the lowest man on this list is Joseph La Framboise, who paid 50 cents on property valued at \$50, and Ouilmette's taxes appear considerably above the average in amount. He also appears as a voter upon the poll book of an election held at Chicago on August 7, 1826, at which election it is said he voted for John Quincy Adams for President (Blanchard, Id., p. 519),



which is the last record I have been able to find of his residence in Chicago.

Ouilmette was a Roman Catholic. In April, 1833, he joined, with Alexander Robinson, Billy Caldwell, several of the Beaubiens and others, in a petition to the Bishop of the diocese of Missouri, at St. Louis, asking for the establishment of the first Catholic church in Chicago. The petition (written in French) says: "A priest should be sent there before other sects obtain the upper hand, which very likely they will try to do." The early enterprise of the church is demonstrated by the fact that the petition was received on April 16 and granted the next day. (Andrea's History of Chicago.) The seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of this church was celebrated with great ceremony this year (1908) in Chicago.

This circumstance, in 1833, and many others, seem to indicate that even after Ouilmette's removal from Chicago to the North Shore he and his family remained intimately associated with affairs in Chicago.

Mrs. Kinzie took Ouilmette's daughter Josette with her to the Indian agency of which her husband was in charge at Old Fort Winnebago, in Wisconsin, on her return from Chicago in 1831. She describes her (Wau-bun, p. 300) as "a little bound girl, a bright, pretty child of ten years of age. She had been at the Saint Joseph's Mission School." Mrs. Kinzie at the time of the Black Hawk War (1832) fled from Fort Winnebago to Green Bay in a canoe and took this same little Josette Ouilmette with her (Wau-bun, p. 426).

That Josette was a protege of the Kinzie family, and that they took a lively interest in her welfare, further appears from the treaty of 1833 with the Pottawatomies at Chicago. She is personally provided for, probably at the demand of the Kinzies, in the following words: "To Josette Ouilmette (John H. Kinzie, Trustee) \$200." The other children did not fare so well, for the treaty further provides "To Antoine Ouilmette's children \$300."

It also seems that the kindness of the Kinzies to Josette was not entirely appreciated by the Ouilmettes. (See correspondence Evanston Hist. Colls.)

Mitchell Ouilmette, on May 2, 1832 (as John Wentworth says), enlisted in the first "militia of the town of Chicago until all apprehension of danger from the Indians may have subsided"—probably referring to the Black Hawk War. Mr. Wentworth's authority is a copy of the enlistment roll, where, in transcribing the copy, his name is stated as "Michael," an evident mistake in transcribing from the original signature.

While it is true that Captain Heald of Fort Dearborn was notified on August 7 or 9, 1812, of the declaration of war against England by a message carried by the Pottawatomie chief, Win-a-mac, or Winnemeg (the catfish), from General Hull at Detroit, warning Captain Heald that the Post and Island of Mackinac had fallen into the hands of the British, of the consequent danger to the Chicago garrison and the probable necessity of retiring to Fort Wayne, still it is stated upon fairly good authority that Louis Ouilmette, son of Antoine, when a mere boy, learned the same facts from a band of Indians on the North Shore, coming either from Mackinac or from that vicinity, and at once carried the information to the garrison several days before the arrival of Win-a-mac. (Authority, data in hands of Mr. C. S. Raddin.)

Some twenty years later this same Louis Ouilmette rendered further substantial aid to the whites in the Black Hawk War. Mr. Frank E. Stevens, in his recent book (1903), "The Black Hawk War" (p. 130, 131, 149), seems to be the only writer who has given him the deserved though tardy recognition to which he seems to be so well entitled. He is there spoken of as "a French trader, thoroughly familiar with those parts (Western Illinois and Wisconsin) and with Indian character." It seems that at this time he was a trader frequenting La Sallier's Trading Post, Dixon's Ferry and other points in that vicinity, rendered valuable assistance as an Indian interpreter and scout. (See Mr. Stevens' book and letters from him, *Ev. Hist. So. Colls.*; Reynolds' "My Own Times," p. 361; *Memories of Shaubema*, p. 184; also *Life of Col. Dement*.)

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From the foregoing facts it is evident that Ouilmette lo-

cated in Chicago in 1790, and lived there for some thirty-six years, and that, as will be shown later, some time between 1826 and 1829 he located within the present limits of Evanston or Wilmette Village, and certainly within the Reservation.

#### OUILMETTE AND FAMILY ON THE NORTH SHORE.

The Indian Treaty of Prairie du Chien, which will be referred to more in detail later, in describing the boundaries of a part of the lands ceded by the Indians, and dated July 29, 1829, begins the description as follows:

"Beginning on the western shore of Lake Michigan, at the northeast corner of the field\* of Antoine Ouilmette, who lives near Gross Point, about twelve (12) miles north from Chicago, thence due west to the Rock River," which is the first evidence I have found of Ouilmette's permanent residence in this vicinity, although he was married to Archange in 1796 or 1797 at "Gross Point," or what is now Wilmette Village and Evanston, this being the first North Shore wedding of which there is any history. (Authority, Sophia Martell.)

This latter circumstance would seem to clearly indicate that the band of Pottawatomies to which Archange belonged was located more or less permanently at this point on the North Shore in the eighteenth century.

John Wentworth says in his reminiscences that Ouilmette's daughter, Elizabeth, married for her first husband on May 11, 1830, Michael Welch, "the first Irishman in Chicago."

This wedding, with the son of Erin groom and the Pottawatomie bride, was celebrated in an old log cabin that stood until 1903 on the east side of Sheridan Road at Kenilworth and about two blocks north of the Kenilworth water tower. The writer took a kodak picture of this log cabin shortly before it was removed, copy of which appears in a paper entitled "Some Indian Land Marks of the North Shore," read before the Chicago Hist. Soc. February 21, 1905. (See also Evanston Hist. So. Colls.) This cabin was built by

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\* Present golf grounds of the Ouilmette Country Club, property of the Northwestern University.

one John Doyle, who, considering his name and date of residence, may be safely designated "the first Irishman of the North Shore," for it is certain there are few living witnesses who can successfully dispute this statement, nor can any good reason be shown why the North Shore should not have its "first Irishman" as well as Chicago.

The authority as to this being the house where the wedding was celebrated is Mr. Charles S. Raddin of Evanston, who secured the information some years ago from Mrs. Archibald Clybourne, who may have been present at the wedding, although Mr. Raddin neglected to ask her. Mr. Raddin was further neglectful in failing to get the name of the best man and maid of honor, and whether they were Irish or Pottawatomie. The ceremony was performed by John B. Beaubien, a justice of the peace, as is shown beyond question by the records of Peoria County.

Ouilmette and his family lived in this cabin at the time of this wedding and for some time thereafter, although their most permanent abode was about a mile south of there, and will receive later mention. (Authority, Sophia Martell, who has examined a copy of this photograph and identified it, and who also corroborates Mr. Raddin regarding her sister's wedding.)

THE INDIAN TREATY OF PRAIRIE DU CHIEN JULY 29, 1829,  
—ORIGIN AND HISTORY OF THE OUILMETTE RES-  
ERVATION—OUILMETTE'S PARTICIPATION  
IN THE INDIAN TREATIES.

The treaty of Prairie du Chien with the Chippewa, Ottawa and Pottawatomie Indians, by which the reservation was ceded to Ouilmette's wife, was concluded July 29, 1829. Among other provisions of land for Indians and others, Article 4 of the treaty provides as follows:

"To Archange Ouilmette, a Pottawatomie woman, wife of Antoine, two sections for herself and her children on Lake Michigan, south of and adjoining the northern boundary of the cession herein made by the Indians aforesaid to the United States. . . . The tracts of land herein stipulated to be granted shall never be leased or conveyed by the grantees, or their heirs, to any person whatever, without the permission of the President of the United States."

The land was surveyed by the government surveyors in

1842 and the patent therefor was issued October 29 of the same year.

This treaty is of special historical interest. By it the United States acquired title from the Indians to all of the land within the city limits of Evanston and great tracts to the west, bounded as follows: Beginning at the north line of Ouilmette's reservation, or a little south of Kenilworth\* on the Lake Shore, due west to the Rock River, thence down the river and east of it to the Indian boundary line on Fox River, established by the treaty of 1816; thence northeasterly on that line to Lake Michigan, thence north along the lake shore to the place of beginning.

[The line mentioned as running "northeasterly to Lake Michigan" is the center of the street in Rogers Park, known for many years and in our records as the "Indian Boundary Road," now unfortunately changed by direction of the City Council of Chicago to "Rogers Avenue." It is about half way between Calvary Cemetery and the Rogers Park depot; crosses Clark Street or Chicago Avenue at the site of the old toll-gate and Justice Murphy's birthplace on the opposite corner. There should be active co-operation in restoring the name "Indian Boundary" to this highway. I am informed that the name was changed at the solicitation of Mr. Rogers' family. He was, no doubt, a worthy pioneer, but his name seems to have been sufficiently perpetuated by the name Rogers' Park which was the former village, now annexed to Chicago. There is, too, a railroad station there of that name and many real estate subdivisions also bearing his name. This Indian Boundary line is not only a great landmark, but the treaty which fixed it has great historical significance in the development of Illinois. This line is referred to in many maps, surveys, deeds and conveyances, is in part the dividing line between the cities of Chicago and Evanston, runs in a southwesterly direction, intersecting other roads and streets in such manner as to make it an important and distinctive highway, the importance of which will grow more and more as the years go by. The disinclination of City Councils to disturb historical landmarks by changing the names of old highways should surely have been exercised in this instance. Both the Chicago and Evanston Historical Societies in joint session at Chicago, November 27, 1906, by urgent resolutions requested the City Councils of Evanston and Chicago "To change back to its original form the name of this highway, thus restoring to it its former proper and historic name 'Indian Boundary Road.'" It is to be regretted that such action has not yet been taken.]

This treaty also included a vast territory lying between the Mississippi and Rock rivers in Illinois and Wisconsin, and was planned, it is said, with reference to the succeeding Treaty of Chicago in 1833 to finally clear Western Illi-

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\* Elmwood Avenue in Wilmette Village.



nois and Southern Wisconsin of the Indians. "By its provisions the Indians became completely hemmed in, or surrounded. To use a common saying in playing checkers, the Indians were driven into the 'single corner' before they were aware of it." (Haine's American Indian, p. 554.)

This treaty was the entering wedge, designed, as above stated, to eventually oust the Pottawatomies and other tribes from Illinois and Wisconsin, and the manner in which its execution was secured reflects no credit upon our nation. If the writers who have investigated the subject can be relied upon, hardly any treaty with the Indians ever made is subject to more just criticism.

It is claimed by Elijah M. Haines, author of "The American Indian," that the two sections of land constituting the Ouilmette Reservation, were given to Ouilmette's wife and children as a bribe for the husband's influence in securing the execution of this treaty. Mr. Haines, late of Waukegan, was for some years Speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives, and spent a portion of each year for many years among the Indians. In his book he devotes some ten pages (550-560) to "the ingenious work in overreaching the Indians in procuring the execution of this treaty," from which it appears, if Mr. Haines is correct, that plans were laid in advance by the Government's agents to carry it through by electing chiefs to fill vacancies in the Pottawatomie tribe who were not only friendly to the whites, but who were parties to a prior conspiracy to dupe the Indians. As the author says, "the jury, being thus successfully packed, the verdict was awaited as a matter of form." Mr. Haines seems to have reached this conclusion after careful investigation, including personal interviews with some of the principals, among whom was Alexander Robinson, one of the chiefs who was elected at the very time the treaty was signed. Mr. Haines sets out a personal interview between himself and Robinson on the subject, which is as follows:

"Mr. Robinson, when and how did you become a chief?"

"Me made chief at the treaty of Prairie du Chien."

"How did you happen to be made chief?"

"Old Wilmette, he come to me one day and he say: Dr. Wol-

cott" (then Indian agent at Chicago, who Mr. Haines says, planned the deal) "want me and Billy Caldwell to be chief. He ask me if I will. Me say yes, if Dr. Wolcott want me to be."

"After the Indians had met together at Prairie du Chien for the Treaty, what was the first thing done?"

"The first thing they do they make me and Billy Caldwell chiefs; then we be chiefs . . . then we all go and make the treaty."

Chiefs Robinson and Caldwell were handsomely taken care of, both in this treaty and subsequent ones, in the way of annuities, cash and lands, as were also their friends. Archange Ouilmette, Indian wife of the man designated by Chief Robinson as "Old Wilmette," and her children thus, according to Mr. Haines, secured the two sections of land constituting the Reservation under discussion and which seems to show, if Mr. Haines is correct, that Ouilmette was, indeed, as already stated, a thrifty Frenchman.

[See map of 1851 in paper, "Father Pinet and his Mission of the Guardian Angel of Chicago," Evanston and Chicago Hist. So. Colls. showing Reservations of Ouilmette, Billy Caldwell, Alexander Robinson and other parties to this treaty.]

There is ample ground, however, for disagreement with Mr. Haines in his voluntary criticism of Ouilmette in this transaction. It must be borne in mind that Ouilmette and his family were not only friendly to the whites during the stirring and perilous times at Chicago in the War of 1812 and also in the later Black Hawk War, but they themselves had suffered depredation at the hands of the Indians, as shown by Ouilmette's letter to John H. Kinzie. Then, too, he was occupying this very land, then of little value, and, considering his fidelity to the Government, notwithstanding his marriage to a Pottawatomie wife, it would seem that this cession of these two sections of land, under the circumstances, was entirely right and probably very small compensation for his friendly services. Then, too, it must be remembered that he did not get the land, but it went to his Pottawatomie wife and her children.

Mr. Haines says of this transaction and Dr. Wolcott's and Ouilmette's connection with it (p. 557): "In aid of this purpose, it seems he secured the services of Antoine Wilmette, a Frenchman, who had married an Indian wife

of the Pottawatomie tribe, one of the oldest residents of Chicago, and a man of much influence with the Indians and a particular friend of Robinson's."

It is fair to say that Mr. Haines excuses both Robinson and Caldwell for their action in the matter on the ground that they had long been friendly to the whites and were misled into believing that the integrity of their white friends was as lasting as their own (p. 556). It is to be regretted that Mr. Haines did not express the same views as to Ouilmette, for history clearly demonstrates that he was richly entitled to it.

This statement of Mr. Haines the writer called to the attention of Sophia Martell and her son, and we have his written reply thereto to the effect that "it is all rot," and that if it was true "Antoine Ouilmette would have received other and different lands for himself," and this reservation was theirs "by right," and "their share of lands allotted to the Pottawatomies and to different families at that time." (See Ev. Hist. So. Colls.)

Ouilmette was also on hand when the Treaty of Chicago (1833) was negotiated, as he was at Prairie du Chien, for the treaty not only provides for the donations already mentioned to Chiefs Robinson and Caldwell, to Ouilmette's children and others, but he secured \$800 for himself, as the treaty shows. Whether this was compensation for his hogs that had been "distroyed" some thirty years before by the Indians (mentioned by him in the Kinzie letter), or as further compensation for his prior services at Prairie du Chien or at Chicago in 1812, is not disclosed, but it certainly is evidence of his desire to see that his finances should not suffer in deals made with his wife's relations.

## RECOLLECTIONS OF THE PIONEERS.

The acquaintance of the first white settlers with the Ouilmette family on this reservation is of interest. To some of their reminiscences reference will here be made:

In a letter written by Alexander McDaniel to the publishers of Andrea's History of Cook County (1884), and quoted in that work (p. 465), Mr. McDaniel thus describes



his first trip to the North Shore and his first observation of the Ouilmette family.

"On the 14th of August, 1836, I left Chicago in the morning and about noon I brought up at the house of 'Anton' Ouilmette. The place was then called 'Gross Point,' being located about fourteen miles north from Chicago on the Lake Shore. The house that the 'Wilmette' family then occupied was a large hewed log block-house, considered in those days good enough for a very congressman to live in, at least I thought so when I was dispatching the magnificent meal of vegetables grown on the rich soil, which the young ladies of the house had prepared for me. I was then a young man about twenty-one years old, and this being my first trip out of Chicago since I had come West, I naturally was curious to know more about my hosts. Upon inquiry I soon found out that the family consisted of Anton and Archange, the heads of the family, and their eight children,—Joseph, Mitchell, Louis, Francis, Elizabeth, Archonce, Sophia and Josette, Lucius R. Darling, husband of Elizabeth, and John Deroshee, husband of Sophia; the father being a Frenchman and the mother a half-breed. The children were nearly white, very comely, well dressed and intelligent. Josette, in fact, had obtained quite a reputation as a beauty. The Wilmettes owned cattle, horses, wagons, carriages and farming implements, working a large tract of land.

"After leaving the family I passed along in a northwesterly direction to where Winnetka is now located. There I purchased the claim on 160 acres of Government land of Perry Baker and Simeon Loveland in March, 1837, built a house on the land and kept 'Bachelors' Hall' there for five years. I had occasion to become very well acquainted with my Indian friends and found them most agreeable neighbors."

(McDaniel moved to Wilmette in 1869. Andrea's Id.)

The following is quoted from Andrea's History of Cook County, p 465:

"About the time Mr. McDaniel settled at Winnetka . . . Charles H. Beaubien, a cousin of Mark, settled near the center of Section 27, on the place now occupied by Henry Gage. Charles Beaubien, like his cousin, Mark, was a great fiddler and always in demand at dances attended by the few blooming white girls of that vicinity and those of a dusky tinge. The Wilmette family were upon such occasions in almost as pressing demand as Beaubien himself."

Joseph Fountain, late of Evanston, now deceased, says in an affidavit dated in 1871 that when he first came here he lived with Antoine Ouilmette; that at that time he (Antoine) was an old man, about 70 years of age, and was living upon the reservation with his nephew, Archange, his wife, being then absent. \* \* \* That within a year or two thereafter the children returned and lived with their father upon the reservation. The children went away again and returned again in 1844. They were then all

over lawful age, had usual and ordinary intelligence of white people and were competent to manage and sell their property. \* \* \* That he was acquainted with the children and their father and after their return assisted them in building a house to live in on the reservation. That during the last twenty (20) years the Indian heirs have not been back there. \* \* \* That in the years 1852 and 1853 the land was not worth over \$3.00 per acre."

On inquiry in 1901 of Mary Fountain, Joseph Fountain's widow, a very old lady,\* and by like inquiry of Mr. Benjamin F. Hill† and others, the writer ascertained that this house of Ouilmette's just mentioned was built of logs, situated on the high bluffs on the lake shore, opposite, or a little north of Lake Avenue, in the Village of Wilmette, and that the former site of the house has long since and within the memory of old residents, been washed into the lake, many acres of land having been thus washed away. Mr. Hill says that this house was at one time occupied by Joel Stebbins, who used it as a tavern.

In 1857 John G. Westerfield acquired that part of the reservation where this house stood and in the year 1865 "tore the old house down." (Andrea's Hist. of Cook County, p. 466.)

Mr. Charles P. Westerfield, surveyor and a veteran of the Civil War, now living in Waukegan, son of John G. Westerfield, in a recent letter (March 9, 1908), corroborates this statement as to the location of this cabin with the exception that he says it stood just a little north of what is now Lake Avenue, or, to be exact, immediately east of the present Ouilmette Country Club House. The following is quoted from the same letter:

"Quite a little grove that stood still east of the cabin site in 1857, when we first occupied the land, was also washed away. I remember that part of the logs of the Ouilmette cabin were used by father to build a cowshed on the old place; he also saved some of the parts as relics, but I presume they are now lost . . . I remember that my child-like curiosity was aroused on at least two occasions, as I watched a small squad of Indians turn out from the old Green Bay Road and go up to the old cabin and look it over as though they were familiar with it, and then again

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\* Mrs. Fountain died in Evanston, February 17, 1905.

† Benjamin F. Hill died in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, October 7, 1905, his residence up to that time, however, having been in Evanston.

resume their tramp, up to about the year 1860-61, the passing of two or three Indians at a time along the Green Bay Road was a common occurrence."

There is no photograph of this cabin known to be in existence but Mr. Westerfield has a very distinct recollection of its appearance and has at the writer's request kindly utilized both his recollection and ability as an artist, in supplying this society with a water color drawing of it (see original drawing Evanston Historical Society Colls., and half tone reproduction—frontispiece, page 2, supra.)

Should the present intention of the citizens of Wilmette and of the Sanitary District of Chicago to create and maintain a public park at this place on the lake front, built by spoil excavated from the Drainage Canal now in progress of construction, be carried out, it is respectfully suggested that the Evanston Historical Society or the citizens of Wilmette, or both, erect at, or near the foot of Lake Avenue, on the former site of the cabin, a suitable monument bearing in substance the inscription:

"On this spot stood the Log Cabin of Antoine Ouilmette, the first permanent white settler of Chicago (A. D. 1790) and of the North Shore (A. D. 1826-1841). He married a Pottawatomie woman of the band of that Indian tribe, located here in the 18th Century. To her and her children this land was granted as a Reservation by the Indian Treaty of Prairie du Chien, July 29, 1829. From him the Village of Wilmette derives its name."

Within a very short distance of Ouilmette's cabin (about 100 feet north) was an Indian mound which had been used for burial purposes—not a large mound but a small one some 10 to 15 feet in length and about 4 feet in height—later this mound was obliterated in plowing of the field by farm hands of Mr. John G. Westerfield and later by the washing away of the embankment by the action of the lake. One of Mr. Westerfield's employees, Daniel Mahoney (now deceased) while plowing with an ox team about the year 1857 or 1858 over and around this mound plowed up several implements including a small steel tomahawk now in the collections of this society—a loan exhibit by Mr. Charles P. Westerfield who is authority for

this item (see his letters Ev. His. So. Colls., under title Ouilmette.)

The affidavit of Mr. Fountain indicates that Ouilmette lived on the reservation until 1838. His letter of 1839 indicates a residence at Racine, at which place he had a farm for several prior years, and while living in Chicago, or at least a tract of land where he frequently went. (Authority, Sophia Martell.)

Mr. Benjamin F. Hill says that he knew him about the year 1838; that he was then a very old man, rather small of stature, dark-skinned and bowed with age; that about that year he went away. He died at Council Bluffs, December 1, 1841.

Mr. Hill says that Mr. Fountain omits in his affidavit one item concerning the acquaintance between Ouilmette and Fountain, viz., a lawsuit in which Ouilmette prosecuted Fountain and others for trespassing upon the reservation by cutting timber, which resulted unfavorably to Ouilmette; that there was a large bill of court costs, which Fountain's lawyer collected by having the sheriff levy upon and sell a pair of fine Indian ponies belonging to Ouilmette, which were his special pride, and that it was immediately after this incident that Ouilmette left the reservation, never to return.

In the years 1843 and 1844 "several of the family returned" to the reservation, "occupying the old homestead until July of the latter year." (Andrea's Id., p. 466.)

The value of the timber probably accounts for the selection of this land by Ouilmette when the treaty was drawn. There are many other interesting reminiscences among the old settlers of Evanston regarding Ouilmette. One from William Carney, former Chief of Police of Evanston and for many years a Cook County Deputy Sheriff, who was born in Evanston, is to the effect that Ouilmette often went through Evanston, along the old Ridge trail on which the Carneys lived, on foot, and always carrying a bag over his shoulder; that the children were afraid of him, and that Carney's mother, when he was a small boy, used to threaten him with the punishment for misconduct of giving him to "Old Wilmette," who would put him in the bag and carry

young Carney home to his squaw. Mr. Carney says: "Then I used to be good." And it is local history that in later years my youthful associates used to say something to the same effect about "being good," after an interview with Mr. Carney himself, when he had grown to manhood and became the first Chief of Police of Evanston, his brother John constituting the remainder of the force. In those days too, "*Carney* will get you if you don't look out!" was a common parental threat in Evanston. (Mr. Carney died in April, 1907, at Evanston.)

#### SALE OF THE RESERVATION BY THE OUILMETTE FAMILY.

As already shown, neither Archange Ouilmette nor her children could, under the Treaty and Patent, sell any of the land without the consent of the President of the United States. Consequently there is much data respecting the family both in the recorder's office of this county and in the office of the Interior Department at Washington, especially in the General Land Office and the office of Indian Affairs. To some of these documents I refer:

By a petition dated February 22, 1844, to the President of the United States, signed by seven of the children of Ouilmette (all except Joseph), it appears that Archange Ouilmette, the mother, died at Council Bluffs November 25, 1840, that six of the children signing the petition then resided at Council Bluffs, and one (probably the former little Josette) at Fort Winnebago, Wisconsin Territory; that in consequence of their living at a remote distance, the land is deteriorating in value "by having much of its timber, which constitutes its chief worth, cut off and stolen by various individuals living near by," which would seem to indicate that people were not so good in those days in Evanston as they have been reputed to be in some later days, if the Chicago newspapers can be believed in this respect. The petition further says: "The home of your petitioners, with one exception, is at Council Bluffs, with the Pottawatomie tribe of Indians, with whom we are connected by blood, and that your petitioners cannot, with due regard for their feelings and interests, reside away from their tribe



on said Reserve''; also that they have been put to expense in employing agents, whose employment has not been beneficial.

The petition then asks leave to sell or lease the land, and the prayer concludes in the following words:

''Or, that your Excellency will cause the Government of the United States to purchase back from us said Reserve of land and pay us one dollar and twenty-five cents per acre therefor.''

''And your petitioners further show that they are now at Chicago on expense, waiting for the termination of this petition, and anxious to return home as soon as possible,''

and request action ''without delay.''

As the result of this petition and subsequent ones, Henry W. Clarke was appointed a special Indian agent to make sale of the Reservation, or, rather, that part of it owned by the seven petitioners, so that a fair price could be obtained, and sale was made to real estate speculators during the years 1844 and 1845. In the correspondence between the various departments of the Government with reference to the sale, appear the signatures of John H. Kinzie, John Wentworth (then member of Congress), William Wilkins, Secretary of War; President John Tyler, W. L. Marcy, Secretary of War; also the signatures of President James K. Polk and U. S. Grant. (For copies of these documents see Evanston Historical Society Collections.)

The south half of the Reservation, including all that is in Evanston (640 acres) sold for \$1,000, or a little over \$1.50 per acre. The north section was sold in separate parcels for a larger sum. The correspondence tends to show that the seven Ouilmette children carried their money home with them, but as the Special Indian Agent had no compensation from the Government and there were several lawyers engaged in the transaction, the amount that the Indians carried back to Council Bluffs can be better imagined than described.

Joseph Ouilmette in the year 1844 took his share of the Reservation in Severalty, deeding the remainder of the Reservation to his brothers and sisters, and they in turn deeding his share to him. The share that he took was in the

northeastern part of the reservation; he secured the best price in making a sale and seemed inclined, not only to separate his property interests from his brothers and sisters, but to be more of a white man than an Indian, as he did not follow the family and the Pottawatomie tribe to the West for several years, but adopted the life of a Wisconsin farmer, removing later to the Pottawatomie Reservation in Kansas, at which time he was a well known man at Saint Mary's, Kansas.

An affidavit made by Norman Clark, May 25, 1871, states that Joseph Ouilmette was in 1853 a farmer, residing on his farm in Marathon county, Wisconsin, "about 300 miles from Racine," and that the \$460 he received for his share of the Reservation "was used in and about the improvement of his farm," upon which he lived for about seven years, and that he was capable of managing his affairs "as ordinary full-blooded white farmers are"; that from 1850 to 1853 he carried on a farm within two miles of Racine, presumably on the land formerly owned by his father, Antoine.

It appears from various recorded affidavits that all of the children of Ouilmette are now dead. Such affidavits must have been made from hearsay and with a view of extinguishing upon the face of the records all possible adverse claims, for, as heretofore stated, Sophia Martell was living at last accounts (1905) on the Pottawatomie Reservation in Kansas, at a very advanced age, but with a good memory that has served a useful purpose in supplying the writer with some of the facts here noted. With this exception, all of the children are dead, but many of their descendants are still living on this same Kansas Reservation, and several of them are people of intelligence and education, prizing highly the history of their ancestors. (See correspondence with them, Evanston Hist. So. Collections.)

The only relic of Antoine Ouilmette in the hands of the Evanston Historical Society is an old chisel, or tapping gouge used by him in tapping maple trees in making maple sugar on the Reservation, at a point a little west and some two blocks north of the present Wilmette station of the Northwestern Railway, immediately west of Dr. B. C.

Stolph's residence. This chisel or gouge was secured by Mr. Benjamin F. Hill in this sugar bush soon after Ouilmette went away, and there is not the slightest doubt of its being the former property of Ouilmette, for Mr. Hill was not only the John Wentworth of Evanston in the matter of being an early settler (1836), with a great fund of authentic information, but was a man of force and intelligence, of excellent memory and unquestionable integrity, and always interested in historical subjects, as his many valuable contributions to the Evanston Historical Society abundantly show. (See Hill Exhibits and papers.)

Mr. Edwin Drury of Wilmette Village, presented (1908) to this society a very curious relic found within a short distance of the former site of the Ouilmette cabin and of Mr. John G. Westerfield's former residence, viz., a very odd piece of broken statuary, dug up by workmen in making an excavation. This broken image was found in a bed of blue clay, some three feet below the surface, immediately under a large wild crab apple tree, the age of which would seem to indicate that the soil had not been excavated nor disturbed for very many years. Whether Mr. Drury's suggestion that it might be a relic of the early Jesuits possibly of Father Pinet, who founded in this vicinity a mission among the Miami Indians in the year 1696, is a question respectfully referred to the local archaeologist. It is at all events an interesting object for study. (See Mr. Drury's letter regarding same, Ev. Hist. So. Colls., title Ouilmette.)

#### RECENT LETTERS FROM A GRANDSON OF OUILMETTE.

There is every reason to believe that Antoine Ouilmette and his family well deserve what little of compliment has here been paid to their history and memory. Should any incredulous reader, however, be inclined to doubt that Ouilmette and his descendants were people of ability or that the flight of time has added any enchantment to this view, the writer would for illustration refer to the correspondence with I. J. Martell, a grandson, on file in the collections of this society. One of these letters, written in a fine hand, showing that the writer has not been inattentive to the ad-



vantages of a common school or commercial college education, and that he at least respects the traditions regarding his grandfather (though with an inclination not to exaggerate the Indian blood in his veins), will here be quoted. This letter is as follows:

"Kansas City, Mo., August 22, 1905.

*"Mr. Frank R. Grover, Chicago. Ill.*

DEAR SIR: Your letters with interrogatories received and in reply thereto, will say: That I am one of the sons of Mrs. Sophia Martell; and a grandson of Antoine and Archange Ouilmette, of whom you inquire.

My Mother is visiting me here, and from her I get the information you desire.

Much more can be said of her and her parents that is hard to put on paper, but which I can tell verbally.

She is now the only one of the eight children of Antoine and Archange Ouilmette living, and is still hale and hearty with good memory and understanding, and she remembers many things of importance regarding the old times.

Her father, Antoine Ouilmette, was a Frenchman, who came to your city in its earliest days from Canada.

Her mother, Archange Ouilmette, was more French than Indian, as her father was also a Frenchman by the name of Francois Chevallier, and her mother was half French and Indian.

From all I can learn, and what I have always heard, Antoine Ouilmette was a progressive, energetic man of good business ability for those times, he accumulated considerable property. He had a store in Chicago, and also a fine lot of horses, cattle, sheep and hogs. He also had a farm at Racine, Wisconsin, which he frequently visited while living in Chicago. He also made occasional business trips to Milwaukee and Canada.

He furnished the Fort with beef and pork and also cordwood, in the later days of his residence in and around Chicago. He had the contract to pilot the lake boats up the Chicago River with cattle, of which I am told he had 100 yoke.

He was known as a kind, whole souled, generous man of remarkable energy and perseverance, who made friends with everybody, both Indians and whites, and he in turn was universally liked and respected. He was very methodical in his habits and ways of doing business, and noted everything down on paper, and prior to his death he left a trunk full of papers which he prized as being valuable.

I can get more detailed information from one of my cousins, now an old man, and also from an old lady who both now live in Oklahoma, concerning him, as they both knew him personally and lived with his family in Chicago.

I would be glad to see and tell you more of him and his family after seeing the parties I refer to, and would like to hear from you at an early date regarding the matter.

If you will bear expense of trips I will go at once to Oklahoma and see them, and then to Chicago and see you.

Can furnish photos of my mother, Joseph and Frank Ouilmette, and may be able to get something of the kind in Oklahoma.

Awaiting an early reply and trusting that I may be of further service to you, I am

Very respectfully yours,  
I. J. MARTELL."

711 Locust St., Kansas City, Mo.

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More than a century has rolled by since this French voyageur first saw the site of Chicago. The snows of eighty winters have come and gone since he and his Pottawatomie squaw made the same choice of a home, in the forest on the shores of old Lake Michigan, that their Anglo-Saxon successors later also chose and now enjoy and occupy. Their log cabin has passed away. They themselves years ago departed forever to "the undiscovered country." The wigwams of the Pottawatomies have long since completed the many successive stages of their westward journey, but we may still enjoy in reverie, if not in recollection, and despite the ceaseless change of the twentieth century, the Ouilmette Reservation and the North Shore as it used to be.

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